

Alfred Kantorowicz: Writing and Exile
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My research project seeks to reconstruct the life and work of the German-Jewish journalist-cum-academic Alfred Kantorowicz (1899-1979), a major figure in twentieth-century intellectual history whose writings are mostly forgotten today. I have embarked on a book-length study that re-examines Kantorowicz in the context of what could be called his nearly lifelong status as an émigré. Based on his unpublished papers, which are housed at the Hamburg State and University Library, my book traces Kantorowicz' evolution from one of the foremost cultural critics of the Weimar Republic to his prominent role in the German-speaking exile community in New York during World War II to his wanderings in the intellectual minefield between West-German reconstruction and GDR Communism after 1945. Alfred Kantorowicz thus emerges as the tragic representative of the ideological struggles that shaped the twentieth century and continue to frame Germany's position in the world today.

Alfred Kantorowicz's biography demonstrates the experience of exile in the twentieth century in an exemplary manner. After working as a cultural correspondent for well-known liberal German newspapers such as the *Vossische Zeitung* throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, Kantorowicz left Germany when the Nazi party rose to power in 1933. He spent the next thirteen years in exile, publishing frantically, deepening friendships with fellow emigrants, and promoting anti-fascist German culture abroad. First, he settled in Paris, where he established the "Library of the Burned Books." In 1937, he enlisted as a volunteer in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. After the fall of France in 1940 and a brief period of incarceration, he managed to escape. Finally, he obtained an American visa and secured passage on a boat out of Marseille; in June 1941, he arrived in the United States. For the next five and a half years, Kantorowicz lived in New York, where he once again worked as a journalist while dedicating himself to the plight of German writers under the Nazis. Upon his return to East Germany in 1947, Kantorowicz initially became a respected figure in intellectual circles. He founded *Ost und West* (1947-1949), a journal devoted to reconciling the ideological differences between West and East Germany, served as the editor of Heinrich Mann's collected works, and was eventually appointed Professor of German Literature at Berlin's Humboldt University in 1950. Soon enough, however, his skepticism regarding the Socialist Party began to affect his tenure at Humboldt. In 1957, unwilling to succumb to the regime's idea of conformity, Kantorowicz defected to West Germany, where he, in his precarious position as a renegade Communist notwithstanding, carved out a niche for himself as a scholar of German exile literature, an academic field virtually uncharted at the time.

Conceived as both an intellectual biography and a comprehensive study of Kantorowicz' writings on the nexus of exile and literature, my book focuses primarily on the time between his departure for New York in 1941 and his death in 1979. Currently, I am researching the unpublished lectures he gave during his tenure at Humboldt University in the 1950s. Here, my interest lies in how Kantorowicz approaches German writers such as Goethe, Keller, and Rilke by subjecting their texts to the state-mandated practice of Marxist literary criticism. I will submit an early version of this chapter to one of the leading German Studies journals this summer.